

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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TO AMEMBASSY ROME

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 5877

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MILAN 0337

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SUBJECT: CABLE FROM CREMONA, FEB 28-MAR 1, 1978

REF: A. 77 MILAN 0961; B. 77 MILAN 0080

C. 76 MILAN 0783; D. 75 MILAN 1867

1. SUMMARY: ALTHOUGH UNEMPLOYMENT STARTING TO BECOME A PROBLEM, CREMONA IS STILL COMFORTABLE AGRICULTURAL BACKWATER WHERE OPPOSING SOCIAL FORCES LIVE AT PEACE WITH ONE ANOTHER. SO MUCH SO THAT THERE IS LITTLE FEAR EVEN AMONG CONSERVATIVES THAT DRAWING COMMUNISTS FURTHER ALONG ROAD TO NATIONAL POWER IS RIGHT THING TO DO. BUT NO MINISTRIES FOR THEM JUST YET, IF YOU PLEASE. END SUMMARY.

2. CREMONA CITY IS LEFTIST-ADMINISTERED FARM TOWN OF 90,000 RSHOSE MUSICAL TRADITION DATES BACK AT LEAST TO STRADIVARIUS, CREMONESE WHOSE VIOLIN IS STILL ON DISPLAY IN CITY HALL. ALSO DEAR TO CREMONESE HEART IS PO RIVER, WHICH HELPS EXPLAIN PUBLIC SENTIMENT AGAINST NUCLEAR REACTOR AT CAORSO, SIX MILES UPSTREAM. (NEWSPAPER EDITOR TOLD US TESTILY THAT GOVERNMENT HAD NEVER GIVEN NATIVES STRAIGHT ANSWERS ABOUT RISKS INVOLVED AND PRECAUTIONS TAKEN). REAL POLEMICS, THOUGH HARD TO IDENTIFY IN CREMONA. LOCALS ATTRIBUTE THAT TO PROVINCES MORE HUMAN DIMENSIONS, CONFIDENTIAL

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CONDITION THEY WANT TO PRESERVE.

3. DPO VISITED CREMONA FEBRUARY 28 TO GIVE SPEECH ON JIMMY CARTER'S HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY TO AUDIENCE OF ONE HUNDRED AT CATHOLIC-ORIENTED FODRI CLUB, STAYING OVER TO CALL ON PREFECT, MAYOR, NEWSPAPER EDITOR, MANAGER OF INDUSTRIALISTS ASSOCIATION AND PROVINCIAL SECRETARIES OF THREE LARGE PARTIES. VISIT OCCURRED AS CREATION

OF NEW GOVERNMENT IN ROME APPEARED TO BE ENTERING FINAL STAGES.

4. BIG NEWS IN CREMONA IS CLOSURE OF ALMOST CENTURY OLD PICTURE FRAME MANUFACTURER AND LAYING OFF ITS 140 EMPLOYEES. EVENT WAS FOCUSING ALL EYES ON PROBLEM OF UNEMPLOYMENT, SINCE FINDING NEW JOBS - ESPECIALLY FOR MAJORITY OF WORKERS, MIDDLE-AGED WOMEN- WOULD NOT BE EASY. HEART OF CREMONA'S UNEMPLOYMENT PROBLEM, HOWEVER, DID NOT CONCERN BLUE COLLAR WORKERS BUT RATHER ASPIRING CLERKS ACCOUNTANTS, AND BUREAUCRATS. OF PROVINCE'S 1700 OFFICIAL- LY UNEMPLOYED, FULLY 95 PERCENT WERE GRADUATES (90 PERCENT HIGH SCHOOL, 5 PERCENT UNIVERSITY) WHO TEND TO REMAIN JOBLESS RATHER THAN TURN TO SKILLED LABOR, CONSIDERED LOWER SOCIALLY DESPITE OFTEN HIGHER PAY. CREMONA SITUATION IN THIS RESPECT TYPICAL OF THAT ACROSS NORTHERN ITALY.

6. EVERYONE IN CREMONA AGREED THAT SOCIAL INFERIORITY ATTACHED TO MANUAL LABOR IS LARGE CAUSE OF UNEMPLOYMENT AND NEEDS CORRECT- ING. UNIONS AND INDUSTRIALISTS' ASSOCIATION HAVE JUST STARTED PROJECT TO TRAIN HANDFULS OF YOUNG PEOPLE AS MACHINISTS IN FACTORIES THAT NEED THEM. PLAN IS NOT AS AMBITIOUS AS SIMILAR ONE IN PAVIA (MILAN 0308) BUT ITS SIMPLICITY MAY MAKE IT EVEN MORE WORKABLE.

7. MEANWHILE, CREMONA'S ECONOMIC PROBLEMS STILL LESS THAN CRITICAL. FIRST OF ALL, EVEN IF ONE ACCEPTS PCI SECRETARY'S ESTIMATE THAT REAL NUMBER OF JOBLESS IS 3,000 (OUT OF 60,000 CONFIDENTIAL

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EMPLOYABLE), UNEMPLOYMENT RATE IS JUST FIVE PERCENT. AND AGRICULTURE, MOST IMPORTANT SECTOR IN PROVINCE, DID WELL OVER PAST YEAR. THINGS COULD BE WORSE.

8. POLITICALLY AND SOCIALLY, WHAT STANDS OUT IN CREMONA IS BASIC HARMONY AMONG FORCES ELSEWHERE AT WAR WITH ONE ANOTHER. UNIONS, FOR EXAMPLE, NOT ONLY GET ALONG WITH ONE ANOTHER (I.E. CISL ONLY RARELY TRIES TO OUTFLANK PRO-COMMUNIST CGIL ON LEFT) BUT ALSO WITH BUSINESS WORLD. PREFECT SAID, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT UNION LEADERS WHO HAD CALLED ON HIM WITH DELEGATION OF LAID-OFF WORKERS REALIZED THERE WAS LITTLE TO BE DONE IN TERM AND HAD NO WISH TO STIR UP TROUBLE. MANAGER OF INDUSTRIALISTS' ASSOCIATION CONFIRMED THAT CREMONA UNIONS WOULD HAVE NO PROBLEM FOLLOWING NEW LAMA LINE.

9. WITHIN CATHOLIC WORLD, TOO, WATCHWORD IS COOPERATION. DC AND DC-ORIENTED SMALL FARMERS ASSOCIATION (COLDIRETTI) GRAVITATE AROUND ACTIVE, MULTI-FACETED FODRI CLUB, WHICH IS HEADED BY CISL PROVINCIAL SECRETARY, WHO RENTS FODRI PREMISES FROM CASSA DI RISPARMIO, WHICH IS DC STRONGHOLD FROM WAY BACK. FRICTIONS THAT EXIST ELSEWHERE IN CATHOLIC WORLD - LIKE SOMETIMES OPEN ANTAGONISM BETWEEN DC AND CISL - ARE NOT EVIDENT IN CREMONA.

10. FODRI CLUB WORTH SPECIAL MENTION. IN TOWN WITH SLIGHT LEFTIST MAJORITY AND VIVID LEFTIST TRADITION, CATHOLIC FODRI IS MOST CONSPICUOUS CULTURAL CENTER. ALTHOUGH DIRECTOR - LEVEL-HEADED CISL SECRETARY - AND SMALL DEDICATED STAFF CLAIM TO BE WONDERING WHERE THEIR NEXT LIRA IS COMING FROM, CLUB IS FITTED WITH EVERYTHING FROM CAFETERIA TO BALLET PRACTICE AND FACILITIES ARE IN USE PRACTICALLY EVERY NIGHT OF WEEK. CLUB ALSO PUBLISHES BOOKS (MOSTLY ON MUSIC), HOLDS CONCERTS, AND INVITES SPEAKERS, OFTEN AT HIGH LEVELS. FODRI EVEN OPEN - AT LEAST TO SOME DEGREE - TO SOCIALISTS AND COMMUNISTS, WHO HAVE TROUBLE CRITICIZING IT. PCI HAS NOTHING TO COMPARE, LACUNA THAT PCI SECRETARY SAID RESULTED FROM CREMONA PARTY DECISION TO CONCENTRATE INSTEAD ON STRENGTHENING CITY ADMINISTRATION.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 MILAN 0337

11. CREMONA DC - CREMONA'S PLURALITY PARTY - APPEARS IN FAIRLY GOOD SHAPE AND MOST THOUGHT IT WOULD BE BIGGEST GAINER IF ELECTIONS HELD TODAY. DC SECRETARY RICCARDO PICCIONI IS SERIOUS, LIKEABLE, 40-YEAR OLD CITY BUREAUCRAT WHO SAID HIS CREMONA ELECTORATE (42 PERCENT OF PROVINCE-WIDE VOTE IN 1976) DIDN'T WANT TO SEE ANY COMMUNIST MINISTERS IN ROME, BUT, ASIDE FROM THAT, DIDN'T MUCH CARE WHAT FORMULA USED. TRANSLATED INTO OBSCURE ITALIAN, THAT MEANS CREMONA DC PERFECTLY WILLING TO ACCEPT PCI INTO GOVERNMENT MAJORITY. POSITION WAS SECONDED BY CONSERVATIVE LOCAL NEWSPAPER

EDITOR MAURO MASONE, WHO ARGUED THAT THIS WAS NOT LAST STAND, THAT LETTING PCI ADVANCE MEANT ONLY LETTING PARTY VOTE IN FAVOR OF GOVERNMENT, AND THAT PARTY COULD BE PUNISHED IN NEXT ELECTIONS IF IT MISBEHAVED. BESIDES, ONE HAD TO TAKE RISKS NOW AND THEN IN DEMOCRACY.

12. INDUSTRIALISTS' ASSOCIATION MANAGER WAS MORE CAUTIOUS BUT MADE SAME POINT. BUSINESSMEN COULD ONLY AGREE WITH WHAT COMMUNISTS NOW SAYING ABOUT ECONOMIC AND UNION MATTERS. TROUBLE WAS, THEY WEREN'T SAYING THAT A YEAR AGO. BUT CONCLUSION WAS SAME AS FAR AS MOVING THEM ALONG TOWARDS POWER. YOU HAD TO TAKE RISK.

13. ON LEFT, PARTIES RUNNING CREMONA GIUNTA APPEARED TO BE DOING JOB CREDITABLY IF NOT BRILLIANTLY. WORST THAT DC SECRETARY COULD SAY WAS THAT CITY HAD LITTLE MONEY TO SPEND THESE DAYS, ADDING CONFIDENTIAL

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QUICKLY THAT THAT WASN'T GIUNTA'S FAULT BUT JUST ROME'S INABILITY TO PROVIDE MORE FUNDS.

14. CREMONA SOCIALISTS - AT LEAST TO HEAR PARTY SECRETARY AND FORMER DEPUTY RENZO ZAFFANELL TELL IT - WERE IN UPBEAT MOOD ABOUT FUTURE. (THEY HAD DROPPED FROM 16.5 PERCENT IN 1975 LOCAL ELECTIONS TO 12.2 IN 1976 NATIONAL ONES.) CRAXI, BY DEALING AS EQUAL WITH BERLINGUER, WAS MAKING RANK AND FILE FEEL PROUD AGAIN TO BE SOCIALISTS. AND HE WAS PUTTING PSI BACK IN TOUCH WITH REAL WORLD THROUGH INITIATIVES IN PUBLISHING AND STRONGER REPRESENTATION IN LEAGUE OF COOPERATIVES AND CISL. CRAXI NEEDED ABOUT THREE YEARS, DURING WHICH TIME PARTY SHOULD DROP TALK OF PCI-PSI GOVERNMENT. NO HARM IN OPENLY FAVORING GOVERNMENT INVOLVING ALL PARTIES BUT THAT WAS UNFEASIBLE AND PARTY SHOULDN'T INSIST ON IT. MEANWHILE, PARTY SHOULD BE AIMING AT MODERATE LEFTIST ELECTORATE, NOT TRYING TO OUT-DO COMMUNISTS ON LEFT.

15. INTERNALLY, PSI ABOUT TO HAVE PROVINCIAL CONGRESS AND FINDS ITSELF HEAVILY PRO-CRAXI. MANCA-DE MARTINO MINORITY OF TEN PERCENT, HOWEVER, INCLUDES MAYOR AND MOST CITY OFFICIALS. CRUSTY, AGEING AUSI MAYOR WAS PESSIMISTIC ON PARTY'S ELECTORAL CHANCES, AT LEAST IN NEAR TERM. EXTREMISTS WERE GIVING ALL PARTIES OF LEFT A BAD NAME THAT COULD COST AT POLLS.

16. PCI, FINALLY, WAS PERFORMING MODERATELY WELL IN CREMONA, HAVING GONE FROM 25.8 PERCENT IN PROVINCE IN 1972 TO 32.5 PERCENT IN 1976. PCI PROVINCIAL SECRETARY EVELINO ABENI, OPERATING FROM MODERN, RECENTLY-REMODELED HEADQUARTERS, WAS YOUNG MAN (EARLY 30'S) WHO HAD STARTED WITH PCI IN 1963 AND COME UP THROUGH RANKS. HIS OUTLOOK WAS CONSERVATIVE ONE. UNIVERSITIES, IN HIS OPINION, WOULD SOON COMPLETE CHAOS IF SOMETHING WEREN'T DONE QUICKLY. PART OF PROBLEM, HE ADMITTED, WAS FORMER PCI-CONDONED PERMISSIVENESS IN SCHOOLS. PARENTS WERE REACTING TO THIS WHEN THEY GAVE CATHOLIC

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LISTS SUCH WELL-MERITED SUPPORT IN RECENT SCHOOL ELECTIONS.

17. WEREN'T COMMUNISTS RISKING PART OF THEIR ELECTORATE BY TAKING SUCH CONSERVATIVE VIEWS? COULD BE, SAID EBENI, BUT PARTY HAD DECIDED THESE POLICIES WERE RIGHT ONES.

18. AND THAT'S HOW IT IS IN CREMONA, WHERE MOST PEOPLE - NO DOUBT EXTRAPOLATING FROM THEIR OWN LOCAL EXPERIENCES - ARE INCLINED TO GIVE COMMUNISTS BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT. IF PCI ENTRY INTO GOVERNMENT CAN REALLY HELP SOLVE COUNTRY'S SERIOUS PROBLEMS, THEY SAY, WE'D BETTER TAKE THE RISK.FINA

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